

for loan repayment for health professionals within the Indian Health Service. As a dentist, I am keenly aware that the IHS dental program has the highest vacancy rate at 34 percent. The loan repayment program has proven to be a successful recruiting and retention tool for dentists and others. However, there is a related issue that I would like to discuss.

Within the next few years, 65 percent of the IHS dental specialists, including pediatric dentists and oral surgeons, will be eligible for retirement. These dentists are in great demand because Indian people have some of the highest oral disease rates in the world. A 1999 IHS survey found that 79 percent of Indian children 2-4 years old had a history of dental decay; 68 percent of adults had untreated dental decay; and 61 percent of elders had periodontal disease.

The dental specialists are a vital component in the IHS dental program. In addition to treating patients, they also train the general dentists for treating complex cases that arise daily in IHS hospitals and clinics.

I hope it is possible to provide additional support for the dental residency program so they can fill these vacancies before reaching crisis proportions.

Mr. DICKS. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SIMPSON. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. DICKS. I thank the gentleman for highlighting the issue and for his concern for improving Indian health care. We agree this is an important issue, and we will work with you to address it.

I might mention that one of the programs over the years that I have been a big supporter of is the National Health Service Corps, which allows people to be trained and work in rural areas. I think there is a multitude of ways to attack this problem, and I appreciate the gentleman's leadership on this issue and guarantee him that we will work hard to do as much as we can because we agree with you that the need for dental care is a very high priority in Indian country.

Mr. SIMPSON. I thank the chairman of the subcommittee.

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SIMPSON. I yield to the gentleman from Kansas.

Mr. TIAHRT. I want to thank the gentleman from Idaho for hitting on a topic that was very important in our hearing process because we heard from not only dentists, but also the medical community that we have a shortage in many other parts of the medical industry including nurses, anesthesiologists, et cetera. But dentistry is one area where they had an acute shortage. And so your leadership is very important in this area. We want to work with you in support of these efforts to make sure that we have enough medical providers in Indian country.

Mr. SIMPSON. I thank the ranking member and the subcommittee.

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Madam Chairman, I rise in strong support of the legislation. I want to commend and congratulate and thank my two good friends, Chairman DICKS and OBEY for their extraordinary leadership. They have produced the finest Interior Appropriations bill I have seen in years, and we owe our two colleagues a great debt of gratitude.

First of all, there is a large increase in the Fish and Wildlife Service to address problems like staffing of refuges of which 221 of the 547 have no staff whatsoever. It will provide \$56 million which will give our refuges the staff necessary to keep this wonderful system the national treasure it is.

It is also a wonderful piece of legislation by giving \$223 million more to the Park Service, a desperately needed situation. The Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund is funded at \$1.1 billion over the President's request, desperately needed in a time when our Nation is seeing our waters get dirtier and less safe and less enjoyable for our people.

The bill reverses years of budget neglect, and provides much-needed increases for public health programs administered by EPA. It increases funding for Superfund toxic waste cleanups, something which is a massive problem to our people, both in terms of safety and the environment. It brings forward brownfield revitalization efforts and addresses the problem of leaking underground storage tanks and will protect the health and environment of the American people.

I want to tell my good friend how grateful we are and thank him for what he has done. I would also like to express my support for EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON's amendment to prevent EPA from finalizing a proposed change in existing rules limiting toxic air pollution.

This is a great bill and I salute the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) for his extraordinary ability, remarkable hard work, and great service.

Mr. DICKS. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DINGELL. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. DICKS. I want to thank the gentleman for his extremely kind words. I just want to say to him that I have appreciated working with him over the years; and we in the Pacific northwest appreciate his great efforts on behalf of the salmon recovery initiatives and our Northwest Power Act and all of the other major environmental legislation that the gentleman from Michigan, the dean of the House, has enacted during his long and illustrious career. I am proud to work with him and with anyone else who wants to make the environment of the United States better for all of our citizens. I thank him for his great leadership.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the gentleman for his kind words.

Mr. TIAHRT. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DINGELL. I yield to the gentleman from Kansas.

Mr. TIAHRT. I would like to thank the grand gentleman from Michigan for coming down here and talking about the importance of this bill; and also acknowledge what a leader you have been on environmental issues over the years and we appreciate your service to the country and your leadership here on the floor.

Mr. DINGELL. I thank the gentleman for those kind words, and I want to utter in return the great respect and affection I have for the distinguished gentleman and for the outstanding work he does here. I am proud he is my friend.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will rise informally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CAS-TOR) assumed the chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 6. An act to reduce our Nation's dependency on foreign oil by investing in clean, renewable, and alternative energy resources, promoting new emerging energy technologies, developing greater efficiency, and creating a Strategic Energy Efficiency and Renewables Reserve to invest in alternative energy, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The Committee resumed its sitting.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will read.
The Clerk read as follows:

COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION

For grants and necessary expenses, \$5,362,000 to remain available until expended, as provided for in sections 221(a)(2), 221(b), and 233 of the Compact of Free Association for the Republic of Palau; and section 221(a)(2) of the Compacts of Free Association for the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, as authorized by Public Law 99-658 and Public Law 108-188.

OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses of the Office of the Solicitor, \$59,250,000.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses of the Office of Inspector General, \$43,822,000.

OFFICE OF SPECIAL TRUSTEE FOR AMERICAN INDIANS

FEDERAL TRUST PROGRAMS

For the operation of trust programs by direct expenditure, contracts, cooperative agreements, compacts, and grants, \$182,542,000, to remain available until expended, of which not to exceed \$56,384,000 from this or any other Act, shall be available for historical accounting: *Provided*, That